

TRAINING PILOT KILLED
FLYING-OFFICER CLIFTON CORNALL, pilot, of Double Bay, was killed when an aircraft crashed during training exercises in south-east Queensland.
 The trainee wireless airgunner, L/A/C. Clive Frederick Wood, of Nelinga, via Tamworth, was seriously injured and is in hospital.

DAILY TELEGRAPH 16.1.44

Airman's family link

□ By Craig Poulter

If life is a stream of tragedies, war has a habit of compounding those unfortunate incidents and making them more constant — such as in the case of Flying Officer Clifton S. Cornell.

Cliff Cornell of RAAF Maryborough died at the age of about 26 in January 1944 when the CAC Wackett trainer aircraft he was flying had engine failure and crashed into a Granville canefield.

Les Sullivan was the last man on the ground to see Cliff alive, strapping him into the Wackett after it was refuelled.

"My father wrote to me suggesting that as I was the last person on the ground to speak to Flight Officer Clifton Cornell. "I should write to his family telling them how I saw him lose his life," Les said. "I didn't do so — 19 year olds even then, were not good at writing letters of condolence."

But Les swore in recent years that if he ever got the chance, he would visit Cliff's grave at the Maryborough War Cemetary and lay flowers on it. Les fulfilled his promise during last year's RAAF Maryborough reunion celebrations.

He then decided to contact Cliff's next-of-kin, and placed a notice in an October edition of the Sydney Morning Herald asking them to contact him.

Several calls resulted, none of which put Les on the right track.

"Next came a call from a former engine fitter at 2 WAGS Parkes, NSW. He remembered Cliff Cornell as a very popular pilot who tried to raise the morale of staff pilots, relegated to training," Les said.

Late that day (October 29) Les finally heard from Cliff's close family.

"A 'Dusty' Haigh, who had married Cliff Cornell's wife's sister, rang and gave me some of Flight Officer Cornell's background before he arrived at Maryborough," Les said. "He had been a member of No 450 RAAF Squadron flying Kittyhawks in the western desert and had been a POW for two years before being freed after the Allied invasion of Italy."



□ The grave of Flying Officer Clifton Cornell stands at the Maryborough War Cemetary.

On November 5 Cliff's sister Delphine Hurrell rang Les from her Canberra home, having been told by a friend of the newspaper.

"She was very appreciative of being able to have the details of her brother's death from an eye witness and we exchanged much detail of our respective lives," he said. "She said he had been married but his wife had died."

Les has since sent Delphine photos of her brother's grave.

Trainee wireless operator Leading Aircraftman (LAC) C.F. Wood of Tamworth survived the crash in which Cliff was killed, though he was seriously injured.

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